



AAC Publications

2009: Meru Central (6,310m), northeast pillar (Shark's Fin), attempt., by A. Grmovsek

Asia, India, Uttaranchal (Uttaranchal), Western Garhwal, Gangotri)

Meru Central (6,310m), northeast pillar (Shark's Fin), attempt.

At the end of August, Marko Lukic, Silvo Karo, and I traveled to Gangotri, hoping to climb the infamous and still virgin Shark's Fin on Meru Central. This line has already repulsed more than 20 expeditions, many of them strong teams. However, in 2008 Anker, Chin, and Ozturk reached a point just 150m below the summit, spending 20 days on the wall climbing in capsule style (AAJ 2009).

Assisted by beta from Anker's team, we planned to climb fast, light, and in alpine style. After reaching base camp at Tapovan, we used unsettled weather to prepare advance base, acclimatize on the lower slopes of Shivling, and study the face. Our second phase of acclimatization was stopped by heavy snowfalls lasting almost one week. There was more than 1½m of fresh snow at higher elevations, and our tent at advanced base was destroyed. The weather then became stable and very cold. Despite the face being plastered in snow and ice, and our having acclimatized only to 5,600m, we decided to make an attempt. The weather forecast was good, deep snow on Shivling made our acclimatization program dangerous, and time was running out.

The approach to the face took two laborious days; we waded through deep, soft snow, excavating our advanced base camp tent and equipment, and crossing the dangerous Meru glacier. On September 17 at 1 a.m. we started to climb. Our plan was to make the ascent in four days, spending the first night in a tent, and then hoping to find small ledges on the steep upper wall that would accommodate sitting bivouacs. On the lower snow slopes we found channels of reasonably hard snow and climbed quite

After eight tiring hours we completed the initial 700m snow slope and started to climb rock on the diagonal ramp. The granite was covered with snow in many places, making climbing and route-finding harder than expected (up to M8). The two climbers following had to jumar with gear for all three, and our two tiny 9.1mm Joker ropes got worn super-fast on sharp granite edges. We got increasingly tired and finished the rock ramp just before nightfall. We expected to find a good place to set the tent but instead spent one hour cutting a small ledge out of snow and ice on which to sit. We were so tired and unmotivated that we didn't melt snow for drinks or cook soup. The night was cold and uncomfortable, and Silvo's feet got dangerously cold; he sustained minor frostbite.

Morning brought sunshine and an easy decision—to go down. We were tired, many things had not gone according to plan, and the hardest part lay above. Our tactic was wrong: we were climbing too fast, we were too heavy, we had unsuitable equipment, we were not acclimatized, and there wasn't enough motivation. With hard and complex climbs like Meru Shark's Fin, these "beginner's" mistakes count.

By Andrej Grmovsek, Slovenia

Images



Meru South (6,660m, left) and Meru Central showing line and high point of Slovenian attempt on the Shark's Fin. Andrej Grmovsek



Marko Lukic on mixed pitches below headwall. Andrej Grmovsek

Article Details

Author	Andrej Grmovsek
Publication	AAJ
Volume	0
Issue	0
Page	0
Copyright Date	2010
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions